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November 7, 1972

Mr. L. Shorter,
Cabinet Commission on Education,
400 Barnett House,
11010 - 142 Street,
EDMONTON, Alberta.

Dear Mr. Shorter:-

The Edmonton Day Care Council would like to express its appreciation of the Alberta Government's concern for the children of our province.

The enclosed brief, presented in response to the report of the Worth Commission on education, outlines our belief that the co-ordination of services for Alberta's young children should be established within a multi-discipline administrative vehicle.

We would like to discuss this matter with you. Please feel free to contact me at my home, 436-5879, if we can be of further assistance.

Cordially,

Anne G. Lightfoot per AH

Anne G. Lightfoot,
Chairman,
Edmonton Day Care Council.

AGL/eh
Enclosure

Copies to: Hon. D. R. Getty
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The Edmonton Day Care Council would like to commend the Alberta Government and Dr. Worth for this comprehensive and far-reaching report on Education in Alberta.

This Council is composed of members of the volunteer boards of the subsidized day care centres in Edmonton. Our interest in the field of child care encompasses infant care, pre-school children and primary school children. Programs from birth to grade three are of interest to us. The co-ordination of services for children in this age group and provision of these services so that they are a support for families are our two major areas of concern.

We agree with the Worth Commission Report that "...early education, the home and the community, must be complimentary to and not substitutes for each other. Whenever possible, early education should be offered within the broader context of total family education." (page 51) However the report recommends that "...the responsibility and authority for the formal aspects of recurrent education should be vested in organizations, agencies or institutions whose primary concern is education." (page 64) This statement seems to be a contradiction of the first statement quoted from page 51 because it diminishes the possibility of offering education in the context of family education and gives too narrow a view of the many ways and settings in which pre-school children do learn.

Many references are made to the need for early education for the handicapped and disadvantaged child, for example (pages 51, 65, 227). The Worth Report recommends that "a selective experience be provided for disadvantaged and/or handicapped children of three and four years of age." (page 65). The suggestion that only this group of children will receive these publicly-supported services does the community a grave disservice. For many children three years is too late for helpful programs to begin. In addition, the child chosen for this selective experience is labelled at three, a label

which is difficult to shake if he stays in his community. The family labelled "disadvantaged" suffers in the same way. It would be extremely difficult to identify these disadvantaged families. According to the Worth Report the conditions likely to produce disadvantaged children are "...low income, one-parent families, working mothers, and inadequate home environment." (page 66). Some of these identifying criteria describe many households which are producing happy, healthy children, while homes where both parents are available for parenting and the income is adequate are producing their share of delinquent, disturbed or inadequately stimulated and socialized children. Because of this "disadvantaged" image many families chosen for these selective pre-school experiences will refuse to be associated with such programs. In our view, making pre-school experiences available on this narrow basis does not provide support for families.

There are government-sponsored programs in operation in rural and urban Alberta at the present time which are funded municipally and through the Preventive Social Service funds, contrary to the statement that Alberta has no such "established plans for publicly-supported endeavors at the pre-school level". (page 65). These programs include day care, readiness and head-start programs. All these programs as well as the educationally-oriented programs contribute to the processes of stimulation, identification and socialization which are stated as being the functions of early education (page 50). We believe that all these varied programs are needed.

Because child care involves physical, social, mental and emotional needs of children, a multi-discipline approach can best meet these needs. Undue emphasis on one aspect, for example health or intellectual development, destroys the balance that would be provided in a good home setting.

"The educational potential of the pre-school years needs to be exploited, but the wholeness of the child should not be lost in the shuffle of educational priorities. The contributions of health, education and social services are all required."[1]

Developmental programs which all have as their goals the support of family life and good parenting should not be isolated from each other. Co-ordination of these services will require a completely new administrative vehicle with a multi-discipline emphasis.

Therefore we recommend that Alberta establish a Child Care Board to be responsible for the establishment and supervision of day care centres and other child-care programs which will:

- plan, set and enforce standards and regulations
- provide information and consultants
- promote the establishment of new child-care services
- approve plans for future child-care services
- arrange funding

Urgent considerations for this Board would be:

- care for infants
- before and after-school care of young children
- services for families where parents work unusual hours
- recreational programs for pre-schoolers
- Mother's-Day-Out programs
- Family Life Education programs
- "Babysitting" and "in-home-worker" programs
- programs for children in hospitals
- programs for handicapped children
- organization of "block-mother" care systems

Decisions regarding funding and subsidization would be made by this Board.

Co-ordination would help families find good support and help in filling their children's needs rather than finding a substitute for parents as the Worth Report suggests in the discussion of day care (page 67).

1. Howard Clifford, "Let's Talk Day Care" (Edmonton: Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta Division, June, 1971) page 127.

We recommend that this new administrative vehicle remain within the jurisdiction of the Department of Health and Social Development as a separate administrative body with staff members specifically trained in the fields of Health, Social Work, Education, and Recreation plus adequate support staff to enable these professionals to act as consultants, planners, and inspectors. Such a staff can more effectively maintain liason with, inspect and assess child care services, and give guidance toward the attainment of standards than can persons lacking such specialized knowledge who may be responsible for a variety of institutions.

To insure that such a body can operate meaningfully, comprehensive legislation in the form of statutes and related regulations should be enacted. As a result the Child Care Board could enable municipalities, organizations, and individuals to operate child care programs in conformity with standards set forth in the statutes.

The best protection for the child when he is not with his parents is a strong licensing law and program applicable to every individual, group of individuals, organizations or institutions that care for children in groups during any hour of the day. In Alberta the minimum standards required for the operation of child care services do not meet the recommended standards for quality care for children. A separate statute must be enacted to regulate staff qualifications in child-care programs, facilities, administration, program, food and nutrition, play space and equipment, sanitation facilities, health, staff-child ratios, all licensing and funding. There must be adequate funds provided so that this Board and the agencies under its jurisdiction are able to provide the services for which they are designed.

This legislation should be viewed not as restrictive but as enabling. Requirements for periodic review, amendments and revisions

should be built into the legislation.

Group care may be the best arrangement for children in some families while others may choose to care for their children at home. All families use some form of support while raising their children. The objective of legislation related to child care should be to secure the opportunity for families to choose how they will care for their children.